

# The God of Fire & the Fire of God

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## Setting

This is Pentecost Sunday, and this OT passage is a prefigurement of Acts 2. In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the Jezreel Valley runs down the middle, with Samaria to the north and Nazareth to the south. Ahab is the wicked king and Jezebel is the even more wicked queen. Because of immense wickedness, by prophetic word, there has been no rain for three years, causing a great famine. This is where the story begins – with King Ahab blaming the Prophet Elijah for their troubles.

### 1 Kings 18:17-46

<sup>17</sup> And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? <sup>18</sup> And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. <sup>19</sup> Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. <sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. <sup>22</sup> Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. <sup>23</sup> Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: <sup>24</sup> And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. <sup>25</sup> And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. <sup>26</sup> And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. <sup>27</sup> And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. <sup>28</sup> And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. <sup>29</sup> And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. <sup>30</sup> And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. <sup>31</sup> And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: <sup>32</sup> And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. <sup>33</sup> And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. <sup>34</sup> And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. <sup>35</sup> And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. <sup>36</sup> And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. <sup>37</sup> Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. <sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. <sup>40</sup> And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. <sup>41</sup> And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. <sup>42</sup> So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, <sup>43</sup> And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and

looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. <sup>44</sup> And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not. <sup>45</sup> And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. <sup>46</sup> And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

- This is a huge story and it seems like God is mixing genres
- He's going to send fire and then will send rain in a great way — like a “spoonerism”

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## Encounter between Ahab and Elijah

- **Ahab** accuses Elijah of being the one of troubling Israel
- **Today** people in sin often say those walking in righteousness are the ones causing trouble
- **Elijah** says that Ahab and his house are the ones that have devastated the Hebrew culture
- **Jezebel**, who is Syro-Phoenician, is a patron of idolatry, with 400 prophets and 450 priests
- **Elijah** proposes a test to settle the question of whose god is real
- **Ahab** agrees, as he feels there is no way he can lose, and Elijah will get his comeuppance

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## The Challenge

- **Elijah** tells all the people — if Baal is God, follow him. If the Lord is God, follow Him.
- **850** prophets and priests of Baal build altar, pray for Baal to consume sacrifice with fire
- **Elijah** mocks them when nothing happens — “maybe he's gone on a journey”
- **850** prophets and priests pray all day and cut themselves with knives, until blood gushed out
- **Elijah** had only from evening sacrifice until dark to build his altar; which he drenched with water
- **Elijah** prayed a simple prayer
- **God** sent fire that consumed everything
- **People** fell down and worshiped God
- **Elijah** killed the 850 prophets and priests

*gods of this world want your blood.*

*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob gives His blood for you.*

*Dr. Rutland —*

*I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet —*

*It's evening in America.*

*Darkness is approaching.*

*Things we knew were sins are now legalized and celebrated.*

*It may look like society is in the majority and you are in the minority.*

*But don't worry about the collapse of American culture.*

*Do not despair when darkness is approaching.*

*It will never be too dark for Pentecostal fire.*

*Don't worry about the time of day.*

*God decides when judgment happens.*

## John Wesley

- **John Wesley**
  - England was in darker place than America is now; gin mills everywhere
  - Church of England compromised, “Do all things in moderation”
  - Theologian and evangelist in 1700s, most unlikely candidate to lead revival
  - Broken, defeated, not attractive
  - Leader of fire of revival that burned through England and America and India

*God just needs one person — one voice.  
The church has to say — sin is still sin.*

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## Killing of 850 Prophets and Priests

- Awkward for our modern, contemporary Christianity
- We tend to major on the grace of God
- God will never call on you to kill a prophet of Baal

*When the fire of God cleanses our life, we need to kill off everything in our former life of sin.*

- **Moonshiner**
  - Refused to listen to man of God
  - Continued to reject by hitting man of God in the forehead with his fist
  - He was killed in car accident with steering wheel column going through his forehead

*God decides when and how judgement happens.*

*He will execute His judgement anytime and anywhere He wants to.*

*We would like to think we can decide when judgement happens — live a long life of sin, and then repent on our death bed. God can “pull your ticket” at any time.*

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## After Fire Comes the Rain

- **Elijah** goes to Mount Carmel, praying earnestly for it to rain, to break three-year drought
- When it starts to rain, he tells **Ahab** to ride his chariot quickly to Jezreel
- **Elijah**, with Holy Spirit power, physically runs ahead of the chariot to Jezreel
- Can't separate the power of Pentecost from the power of prayer
- God calls on us to participate in persistent believing prayer

**1. Holy Spirit Fire**

**2. Abundance of Blessing (rain)**

**3. Holy spirit power (anointing prophet)**

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## In America

- It may be evening in America
- God is not done
- God is not through with any country that is not through with God
- God is not on our time clock
- Let the God of Fire answer with the Fire of God

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## Personal Life

- Key to the whole thing — Elijah says — “Make up your mind — serve Baal or serve the Lord.”
- How long are you going to dance between sin and repentance?
- Make up your mind, who are you going to serve?
- Declare that the Lord is God!

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## Discussion Questions

1. Have you experienced someone living in sin accusing you of causing trouble because of your living a righteous life? How did you handle it?
2. Discuss “The gods of this world want your blood, while the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob gave His for you.”
3. Did this sermon encourage you in that, even though it’s “evening in America,” there is no reason for despair, because it is never too late for Pentecostal fire?
4. Discuss God’s attribute of “judgement” being equal with those of “grace” and “love.”
5. Have there been times in your life when the trials of fire have been followed by the blessings of abundant rain?

# NOTES